



Newsletter

DECEMBER 2007

Season's Greetings to all our study children and their families! This year, we have been working towards the start of the third round of interviews, making sure we ask questions that are relevant to the progress your child has made since we last interviewed you.

For some families, interviews have already been conducted, but most families will be contacted from March next year. Like last time, interviews will be with experienced interviewers from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, who have told us how much they enjoyed the study and how they are looking forward to seeing all the families again.

Data from the second round of interviews was released in September and already we and other researchers are looking at how the children have progressed over the two years since the first interview. Results of this work will become available from the end of the year.

On 3-4 December the Institute is convening its first conference dedicated to the *Growing Up in Australia* study. There is a great deal of interest in this conference, and some of the topics being covered are given in this newsletter.

One of our biggest challenges is keeping in touch with those of you who move each year. Please do let us know if any of your contact details change.

As always, thank you for continuing to be part of this very important study. Only through your continued support can we obtain the best possible information for the benefit of all Australian children.

Best wishes

Professor Alan Hayes
Director, Australian Institute of Family Studies



The longitudinal study of Australian children

Initiated and funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Growing Up in Australia

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STOP PRESS Wave 2.5

A 'between waves' mail out was conducted in 2007 with most families. Thank you to all the families who completed and returned the questionnaire. These questionnaires provide us with valuable information and are a useful way of keeping in touch with you. Information from this part of the study will be available from April 2008.

If you haven't sent back your questionnaire yet, it is not too late and we would be delighted to hear from you.



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Family Studies

Growing Up in Australia is the longitudinal study of Australian children. It is designed to identify policy opportunities for improving support for children and their families and for early intervention and prevention strategies.

Growing Up in Australia is following representative samples of approximately 5,000 infants and 5,000 four to five year olds and their families from 2003-4 until 2010 and possibly beyond.

You can visit the *Growing Up in Australia* website at any time to get the latest information on the study. Every three months we produce a general newsletter for the website with updates on the study's progress.

www.aifs.gov.au/growingup



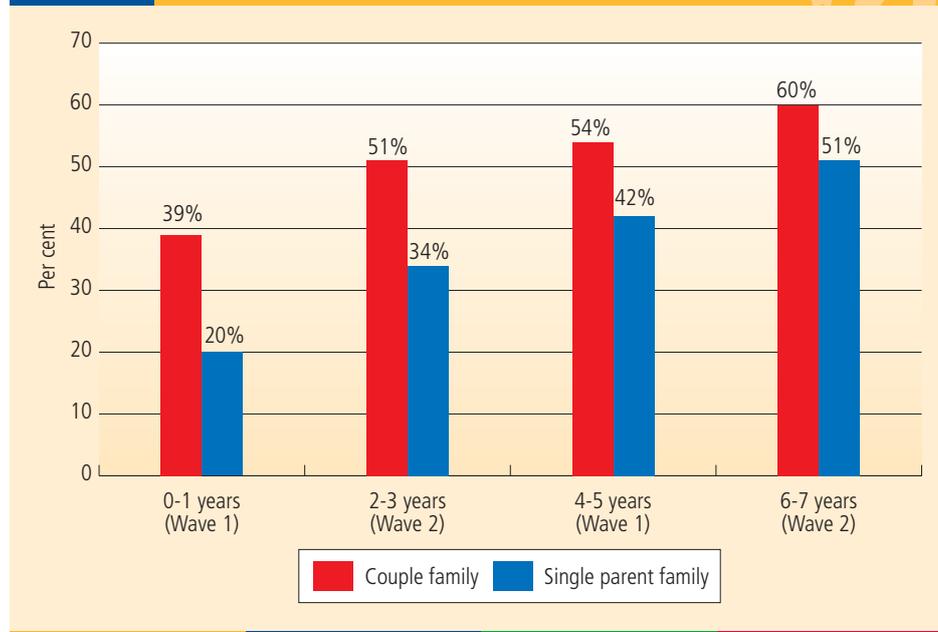
The longitudinal study of Australian children

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Updates from the second wave of interviews

A copy of the "Study Update" that highlighted some early findings from the second wave of interviews was sent to you earlier this year. We have already begun analysis that looks at both the first and second waves of information. For example, the figure below shows how the proportion of mothers in paid work increased as the study children became older, for mothers who were sole parents and those with partners.

Figure 1 Proportion of mothers in paid work, by age of study child and family type



Taking part in the study

There has been very positive feedback from both interviewers and respondents regarding their involvement with the study. As one parent said:

"Being part of a study that will be taken into consideration when future services for families are planned is a good feeling."

and from an interviewer :

"I would just like to say how thankful I am for having the opportunity to work on Growing Up in Australia. This would have to be the most enjoyable interviewing yet."

The third interview is following a similar format to the second. The main change is that there are some activities for the younger group of children, who will be aged 4-5 years. These are like the activities the older children enjoyed doing at the first interview, and are similar to things children do at preschool and school – writing and drawing, and matching pictures to words read out by the interviewer.

The older children, who will be aged 8-9 years, will continue to do similar activities. Last time they were also interviewed themselves, and this time the interviewer will ask them some new questions about their feelings and their friends, family and school.

Growing Up in Australia (LSAC) Conference, 3-4 December, Melbourne

We are very pleased with the number of submissions received for the inaugural LSAC Research Conference. Over 30 papers will be presented on a diverse range of topics. Some of these are:

- *Parenting quality and the development of young Australian children.*
- *Do Australian children have more or less problems than they did 20 years ago?*
- *Effect of parents' work arrangements on children: how jobs can be really family friendly.*
- *The financial consequences of relationship breakdown and re-partnering.*
- *The child care question: is social-emotional development at age 2-3 years related to children's experiences of non-parental care?*

Life at series

The Institute is very pleased to be involved with the *Life at* series developed by Film Australia in conjunction with Heiress Films. We know that many of you enjoyed *Life at 1*, the first installment in this landmark series following 11 babies and their families. The series tracks families through their ordinary routines and milestones, and looks at the impact on their lives of things such as parents' relationships, finances, work, health and education. The series draws on the experience of the *Growing Up in Australia* study and the families in the documentary complete the same series of interviews and questionnaires as you do.



Following from the successful screening of *Life at 1*, a *Life at 2* website www.abc.net.au/lifeat2 was launched by the ABC to provide updates on the families and their children between the documentary waves.

One feature of the *Life at 2* website is the live forums, where parents and other interested people have the chance to ask the experts questions about different topics. The first forum was in July with Professor Ann Sanson, principal scientific advisor to *Growing Up in Australia*, on: "If the world really has gotten any better or worse for our children in the past twenty years". Forums are held each month, and have also covered:

- *Does it take a village?* (August) by Dr Ben Edwards, an Institute researcher.
- *The childcare question – what are the choices?* (September) by Dr Linda Harrison, Consortium Advisory Group member.
- *Grandparents – what would we do without them?* (October) by Sebastian Mission, *Growing Up in Australia's* Data Manager.
- *Parents and jobs: What does family friendly really mean?* (November) by Dr Lyndall Strazdins, Consortium Advisory Group member.

You can visit the *Life at 2* website and join in on the discussion live at the scheduled times (these are being held on the last Wednesday in every month, except December). Alternatively, you can check out the website to view previous forums by looking at the 'Latest Research Message Board' and/or the monthly archives.

Life at 3 is currently in production. Institute researchers returned to conduct the second wave of *Growing Up in Australia* interviews with the families featured in the documentary. The researchers felt privileged to catch up with the families and see how they are progressing. Advice and commentary for the documentary is being provided by some of our Consortium Advisory Group members.

Conferences featuring *Growing Up in Australia*

During 2007, presentations using information from *Growing Up in Australia* were made at a number of conferences both in Australia and overseas. These included:

- *Growing up in Australia: A view on the past, present and future of the study of children's development.* Keynote presentation to the 15th Biennial Conference of the Australasian Human Development Association (AHDA) Conference, Sydney
- *Findings on child care choices from the longitudinal study of Australian children.* (AHDA)
- *Mothers' work-family strain in single and couple parent families: the role of job characteristics and supports.* (Australian Social Policy Conference (ASPC), Sydney)
- *New light on the overscheduled child controversy: evidence on children's activities and children's outcomes from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children.* (ASPC)
- *The influence of parental employment on how children spend their day.* (ASPC)
- *Neighbourhood influences on young children's emotional and behavioural problems and prosocial behavior: evidence from an Australian national sample.* (ASPC)
- *His and hers jobs: when the quality of partners' jobs matter.* (ASPC)
- *Linking child and family characteristics to children's early learning competence: an Australian study.* (Biennial Conference of the Society for Research in Child Development, Boston)
- *Preschooler obesity and parenting styles of mothers and fathers: National population study.* (Pediatric Academic Societies Meeting, Toronto, Canada)

Consortium Advisory Group

The study is provided with expert advice from members of our Consortium Advisory Group (CAG), most of whom have been with the study from its inception. The group meets in person at least twice a year with the Institute, the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and by teleconference each month, to assist with the study's development.

Pictured are members of the CAG at one of the 'face-to-face' meetings.



CAG members pictured (L to R) front: Judy Ungerer, Ann Sanson, Melissa Wake; middle: Linda Harrison, Donna Berthlesen, Michael Sawyer, Lyndall Strazdins, Michael Bittman; back: John Ainley, Sven Silburn, Bryan Rodgers, Jan Nicholson, Steve Zubrick.

If you are moving...

Please help us keep in touch by updating your address and contact details. You can do this in a number of ways:

- Phone free-call 1800 005 508
- Email growingup@abs.gov.au
- Complete and send the pre-paid change of address card - located at the back of the 2008 Growing Up in Australia calendar.

Thank you!

Growing Up in Australia:

helping to make sure all children have a good start in life